

FIFTY-FOURTH CONGRESS.

It Begins Its First Session at Noon, Dec. 2.

WORK BEFORE BOTH HOUSES.

New Members and the Faces That Will Be Missed.

What the National Legislators Do on the First Day—Ceremonies Which Mark the Incoming Congress—A Reading Which Nobody Listens To—Taking the Oath of Office in Batches—The Excitable New Member and the Stolid Old One.

The Fifty-fourth congress will begin its first session in Washington Dec. 2.

When its members were chosen, there was a grave question whether they would be called together last spring in extraordinary session. The president did not see the necessity for that, so the regular ses-



VICE PRESIDENT STEVENSON. (President of the senate.)

sion of the congress is its first session, and the men who will gather in the hall of the house of representatives and the senate chamber will have waited 13 months for the first use of the privileges and powers conferred on them in the election of 1894.

No, not for all the privileges. The sergeant-at-arms has a habit, long established by common usage, of advancing newly elected members money on their salaries after the 4th of March provided there is no contest for their seats. The pay of members and senators begins March 4 at noon, though neither members nor senators are sworn in until the meeting of congress, which may not occur, as in the present case, until nine months later.

In at least one instance, which is a part of the unwritten history of the house, the sergeant-at-arms advanced money to a member who was contesting a seat, knowing that the contestant was of the same faith as a majority of the members of the house and having no doubt that the contest would be decided in his favor from political sympathy, as is the common rule. And it is recorded in the memories of many of the older members that this contest was decided on its merits, and that the sitting member was permitted to keep his seat, which so complicated the accounts of the officers of the house that a great scandal resulted. Since that time no money has been advanced to members until it had been earned, at least constructively. Constructively a member serves his country from noon of the 4th of March after his election; actually the new member in most cases begins his work after the first Monday in December.

The Pennsylvania Avenue Parade. The procession which will move on the capital by way of Pennsylvania avenue Monday morning, Dec. 2, will be remarkable chiefly for the absence of familiar faces.

Mr. Reed of Maine will be there no doubt. He usually walks to the capital because it affords him the only exercise he gets during the long legislative day, and even through the term of his speakership, so soon to be renewed, his slow swinging gait was familiar to the pedestrians on the avenue between 10 and 11 o'clock of every bright morning.

His colleague, Boutelle, just back from Europe, will be another pedestrian figure. So will the hard worked Dingley and the earnest, thin faced Milliken, for the election of 1894 left the Maine delegation intact.

Dockery of Missouri, cordially hated by the department clerks for his crusade in favor of the revision of the list of government employees, will be one of the few survivors of the Missouri congressional colony.

Cobb of St. Louis, elected in spite of himself; the fiery Tarnsey of Kansas City, Hall and De Armond are all that are left to Missouri, but Charles F. Joy of St. Louis, who was unseated by the Dem-



THOMAS B. REED. (Speaker of the house.)

ocratic house two years ago, will have his revenge as he strolls up the avenue, rehearsing the list of men who voted against him and who are now in private life.

"Private John" Allen of Mississippi, the quaint humorist whose fun is never bitter or malicious, and Herndon Money, his colleague, now a hot contestant for the senatorship from his state, are both in the new congress, but Money will possibly be at home on Monday next, attending to his senatorial duties.

Ex-Speaker Crisp will join the procession at his winter home, the Metropolitan hotel, headquarters of southern statesmen, but the Metropolitan no longer harbors

the courtly Ransom, so long a member of the senate, now minister to Mexico.

Cannon of Illinois, grizzled and gray, will pull his slouch hat over his eyes as he turns into the avenue from Fifteenth street and meets the rays of the morning sun. Six years ago he was a candidate for speaker against the man who is now conceded to be the unanimous choice of the Republican members of the house.

Burrows of Michigan, another of the candidates at that political crisis, is now a senator from the state of Michigan, promoted to higher honors at the last session of congress.

Cobb of Alabama, best known as the author of "Where am I at?" is one of the survivors of the last political revolution.

Hilborn of California, turned out like Joy of Missouri, returns as he did to serve his full term this time. Catchings of Mississippi, confidant of the administration, is another of the survivors. So is McCleary, ex-governor of Kentucky, but he and Berry are the only members of the old Kentucky delegation left.

The face of Breckinridge will be missing. So will many another familiar one—Bland of Missouri, father of the cart wheel dollar; Holman of Indiana, watchdog of the treasury for 30 years; Bourke Cookran, New York's famous campaign orator; Bryan of Nebraska, the "boy orator of the Platte;" Springer of Illinois, who introduced the famous anti third term resolution in the house when Grant was a candidate, and who has been sent to Oklahoma to fill a judge's place side by side with that famous kicker, Kilgore of Texas.

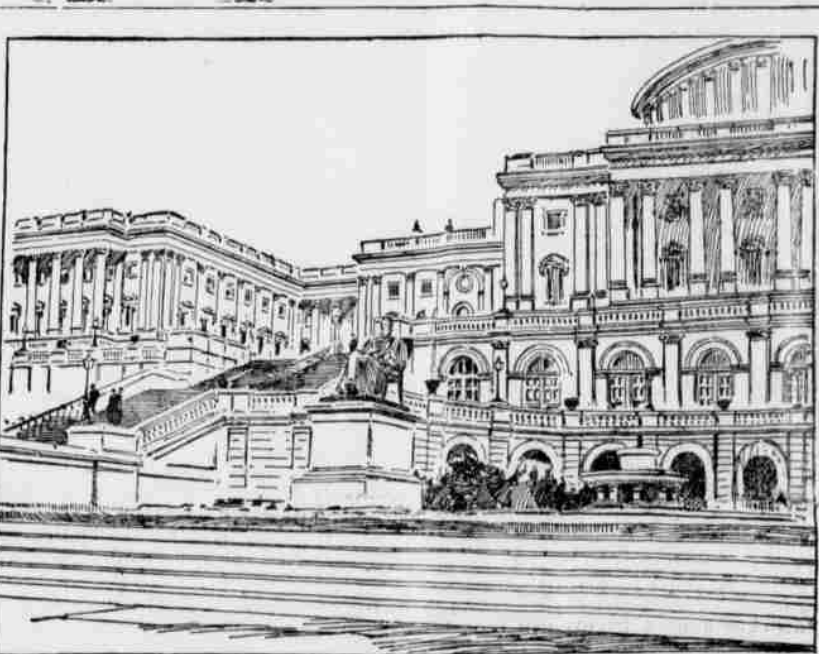
Cann of Indiana will not be in the congressional parade; he will eye it not enviously from the office of his Washington newspaper, for like that other ex-congressman, Beriah Wilkins of Ohio, he has prospered in the field of journalism at the capital.

But the list is too long. It would fill a column to record all that have gone and all that still remain. To the stranger eye perhaps the procession will be much as it was two years ago. Here and there a face made familiar by the cartoonists will appear, but for the most part the crowd on the famous avenue on the morning of the first Monday in December is made of curious visitors and the customary shopping mob of Washington men and women. There is more of life in the throng than there has been for many a day, for all roads do not lead to the capital, and Pennsylvania avenue is the chief thoroughfare to that Mecca of the politician.

The Meeting of the Senate.

The number of new faces in the senate chamber when the vice president calls that body to order will be comparatively few.

Mr. Ransom will be missing. Mr. Butler of South Carolina, another relic of



WEST FRONT OF THE CAPITOL, MAIN ENTRANCE, LEADING FROM PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE.

the age of chivalry in the south, is also gone into retirement. Georgia sends Augustus O. Bacon to take the seat held for a brief space by Patrick Walsh, the editor of the Augusta Chronicle. Mr. Gear, an old time member of the house, best known as "Governor Gear," fills the seat of William of Iowa.

Ex-Governor Knute Nelson, known now so long ago as a member of the house, takes the place of Washburn of Minnesota.

Mr. Dixon of Rhode Island gives way to George E. Badger of Vermont. W. J. Wetmore, once a member of the senate and well known of later years as President Harrison's hunting companion on many a trip, takes the seat of Mr. McPherson. Ex-Secretary Elkins, once of the Harrison cabinet, succeeds Johnson Camden of West Virginia.

Ex-Senator Warren of Wyoming returns to take the place of Mr. Carey, and Thomas S. Martin of Virginia displaces Eppa Hunton.

Not many changes. But the senators serve for six years and are reasonably sure of re-election. Mr. Morrill has been in the senate 28 years. Mr. Sherman 30 years. Mr. Allison 22 years. Mr. Ransom had served for 23 years continuously when he retired.

Because there are so few newcomers among them the gathering of the senators is like the reunion of a big family. No party distinctions are drawn as they group themselves on the floor of the senate chamber on the opening day of the session. Personal friendships obliterate for a time that imaginary line which separates Democrat from Republican, and the representatives of the parties and of all sections of the country mingle freely, shaking hands, exchanging congratulations on improved health, swapping a little gossip of the late election perhaps.

Some are subjects for congratulation. Their recent campaigns have been successful and promise re-election when state legislatures meet. But Hill and Bryce and Gibson receive condolences on defeat. It is all good natured, though, and we even of those who are most bitterly disappointed find it in their hearts to be anything but jolly on the first day of the session.

A long time before the noon hour the floor of the chamber has been cleared of strangers. The pages hurry to and fro with an air of bustling importance. They are prime factors in legislation, they think. But at least from this day they are the recipients of a daily stipend of \$2, and that is a matter of much seriousness to them.

Captain Isaac Bassett, the chief among

them, now past the semicentenary of service and conscious of its importance as a one time protégé of the great Webster, is in charge of the floor. Everything is fresh and clean and bright looking. The furniture has been repolished, a new carpet has been laid. The senate wears out a carpet in every congress.

The senators drop in one at a time. There are not many in their places usually when the gavel falls, but on the opening day there is a larger number than is customary at other times.



SENATOR GEAR OF IOWA, and at his home in Bloomington, and whose ruddy complexion tells of improved health, and Dr. Milburn, the famous "blind chaplain," who has been in the service of congress off and on since he was a youth and whose thousands of miles of travel have been increased during the congressional recess by a trip to Europe.

The gavel of the vice president is an ivory device, small and shaped something like an hourglass. It has been in the care of Captain Bassett through the summer, concealed no one knows where, but hidden as completely as is the identity of Daniel Webster's desk, which Bassett has stored in his mind.

When the Gavel Falls.

The vice president takes the little gavel and taps lightly on the cloth covered desk. Conversation ceases and many of the senators rise and remain standing while the chaplain delivers a brief invocation. At its conclusion the chairs fall rapidly. There is no journal of the last day's session to read, and the first business to transact is the swearing in of newly elected senators. Many have been sworn in at the last session in preparation for their inauguration today. So this business is accomplished quickly.

Then a committee of old senators is appointed to act with a committee of members of the house in notifying the president that congress is in session. After this a recess is taken till the committee is ready to report. Carriages have been waiting to convey the committee to the White House, and the journey is made quickly.

In half an hour the committee is back

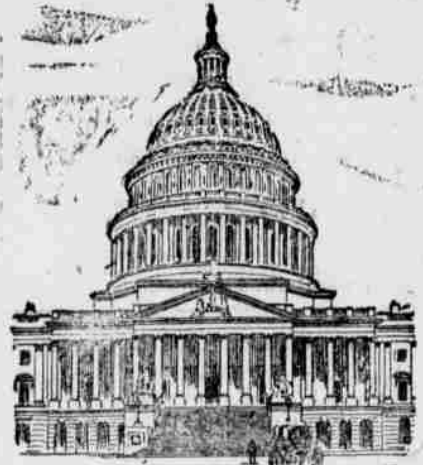
congress. At the beginning of the next congress he must take his chance with the newcomers for a desirable place.

The new congressman is all excitement as he sits in a group of admiring friends who have come to see him installed. His wife and children are in the gallery perhaps, and he tries to look less conscious than he feels for their sakes.

The older member has much to say to old friends on the floor—reminiscences to exchange and regrets to express for the departed. But the beginning of the session is an old story to him. Perhaps he feels a momentary uneasiness about that committee chairmanship which was only half promised to him, but he keeps his own counsel about it. He does not get flurried because he knows that will do no good. He has put in all his hard work in advance of the meeting of the caucus, and he knows nothing will help him now.

The galleries fill early, and there is a continual coming and going of strangers on the floor until ten minutes before noon. Then a warning to clear the floor is shouted from the clerk's desk, and slowly the doorkeepers show the intruders out. Many a new member has to save himself by a tardy identification, for the doorkeepers have no means of knowing the debutants.

At noon the house is in a hubbub. Floor and galleries are talking at a lively rate when the clerk with the speaker's gavel in his hand calls the house to order. The



THE CAPITOL, EAST FRONT.

speaker's gavel is no ivory toy; it is a mallet of hard wood, guaranteed to wear out the top of the speaker's desk before the session is over if the house is inclined to be at all lively.

The noise in the hall is hushed in great part when the clerk begins to call the roll of the house. To him is given the authority to make up the roll of the new members, and any person whom he deprives of a seat in making up that roll must go to the elections committee and through it to the house for redress.

When the roll has been called, the members are called to the desk in batches to be sworn in. All raise their right hands and so take the oath which the clerk reads to them. This ceremony concluded, the election of officers of the house takes place.

The selection has been made a day or two before hand, each party preparing in caucus a list of candidates. But the names are presented to the house as formally as though no selection had been made, and the clerk calls the roll and records the vote of each member as carefully as though the contest was being fought out on the floor.

The Lottery of Seats.

When Speaker Reed has been chosen formally, he will be escorted to the chair by a committee, and he will make a brief speech as he takes the gavel. The other officers will be installed in the order of their importance. And then will occur the only really exciting incident of the day.

For no one can determine in advance what the allotment of the seats in the hall will be, and so much depends on this allotment that it is watched by new member and old with almost feverish anxiety. The rules of the house provide for a lottery of seats, and two pages are stationed at the clerk's desk to draw from a box the names of the members. Each member as his name is called selects a seat and takes possession of it.

The least experienced of the new members may have first choice of seats, and the father of the house—to whom, by the way, is intrusted the duty of swearing in the speaker—may be the last person reached in the list. Old or new, a member must take possession of his chosen seat and hold it till the end of the call, for only possession is proprietary after the roll call has begun. The importance of location is better appreciated by the older members, who know how difficult it is in an obscure place to catch the speaker's eye in an effort to address the house.

Other incidents of the opening session are the appointment of the members of the committee to notify the president and, if the president should send the annual message in, the reading of that document.

Here, as in the senate, the message receives but scant attention in the reading. Most of the members take the printed copies into the committee rooms and read the document at leisure there. The house, so soon as the reading is concluded, and the first session is usually hardly more than an hour or an hour and a half in length. No bills are introduced because, unlike the senate, the house has no rules to govern it. It is acting under general parliamentary law until such time as it shall adopt the rules of the preceding house or formulate a code for itself.

It is more than likely that the rules adopted by the house in the Fifty-fourth congress will be those prepared under the supervision of Mr. Reed when he was speaker before, those famous rules whose enforcement won for him the hatred of the Democratic members of the house and gave him throughout the country the title of "czar."

The Business of Congress. When the house has adopted a code of rules, there will be no lack of bills and resolutions. There is always much unfinished business left by one congress for its successor to take up. And then there are changing conditions which make necessary certain new legislation.

For example, the new congress will have to consider the question of providing revenue adequate to the government's expenditures, a condition which was not expected when the compromise tariff bill was agreed to.

Vice President Stevenson said this summer that he had no doubt the Republicans in congress could agree with the administration on some measure to increase the revenue which would be acceptable to both parties, but already Senator Sherman is

talking about agreeing to nothing if it does not include protection to wool.

If all the Republicans take the same view of the matter, it is not likely any agreement can be reached. There would be as much fighting over local interests in that case as there is when a general tariff bill is under discussion. It the Democrats had house and senate, it is likely internal revenue taxes would be increased. Even many Republicans are said to favor a tax on "patent" medicines and an increased tax on beer.

Then the congress has the financial problem to solve, and that will include no doubt the recommendation made by the president just before the 4th of March for the passage of a law authorizing the issue of bonds to keep up the gold reserve. On what lines the financial problem will be treated is something no one could venture to predict.

In fact, many public men—men who will have something to say about its solution—shake their heads and say they see no hope of disposing of the question in the coming congress at all.

Mr. Gray of Delaware says he believes the two houses of congress will be so busy "playing politics" that they will not be able to come to an understanding about finance.

One of the first bits of politics to be "played" will be undoubtedly the institution of a series of investigations of the administration's bond issues and its foreign policy. The Republican members of the house are aching for a chance to get at Mr. Cleveland. Hawaii will come up for consideration, and so will Nicaragua and the more recent happenings in Venezuela.

It was a Republican boast last summer that the president did not want to call a special session of congress because he feared investigation.

Two important foreign matters are to be considered again during this congress—the Bering sea award and the Nicaragua canal. Mr. Gresham agreed with England on a payment of \$425,000 to the sealers in Bering sea, but the last house refused to accept this adjustment of the question.

Cuba will also come on for early attention, for there is no doubt a proposition to recognize the rebellious natives as belligerents will be made in both house and senate, and the discussion of it will give the Republicans more campaign material.

In home affairs there is the bankruptcy bill, which has come so near adoption in two congresses, but which still hangs fire. It passed both house and senate three years ago, but never got through conference. In the last congress it passed the house. Its legislative experience has polished it and made it a more perfect measure of its kind than when Mr. Torrey first brought it to Washington.

The bill to reorganize the navy and so dispose of the "hump" in the naval list as to give younger officers a fair chance of promotion will be taken up again at the urgent recommendation of the secretary of the navy.

The proposed reorganization of the army also will come in for a share of attention. This measure differs from the other in that it is not supported unanimously by the officers affected. The cavalry officers think the reorganization proposed by Secretary Lamont will do them great injustice.

From the postoffice department will come many propositions which will call for consideration, among them undoubtedly being the bill to classify clerks in first and second class post-offices, which failed of consideration at the last session, and the bill to pension the wives of mail clerks killed in railway accidents. The Pacific railroad committee will have again the seemingly hopeless task of effecting an agreement for the reorganization of the Pacific roads.

A question which may affect legislation seriously will come up for consideration in the senate immediately after the meeting of congress. It is understood generally that the Republicans and Democrats will come to an agreement about the organization of the senate so that the Populists and silverites will not hold the balance of power.

If the Republicans should take control of the senate by any combination, however, and should take the responsibility for legislation there, the senate's policy may be very different from what it will be if the two parties exercise a joint control and the responsibility lies nowhere.

Another problem which concerns the fate of legislation is the choice of committee chairmen in the house. Much power to suppress or forward legislation lies with the chairmen of committees. Hitt of Illinois will have foreign affairs and Boutelle the naval committee. Appropriations may go to Cannon of Illinois or Henderson of Iowa, and Cannon is the favorite. For work and means there are Payne of New York, Dalzell of Pennsylvania and Dingley of Maine, with chances favoring the first named. If Mr. Dingley fails on ways and means, he will get coinage, weights and measures without doubt.

GEORGE GRANTHAM BAIN.

The Safety Window. A new device which marks an improvement in modern architecture is introduced as a safety window. This new window is being placed in many of the large hotels and other New York buildings. According to the New York Tribune, this device will decrease the accident and death rate also, for the police records of New York city alone show 450 odd accidents or deaths in the past ten years. Although the safety window slides up and down as does the ordinary window, it also revolves so as to be easily cleaned in the inside of the room; thus its life and accident saving feature. It can also be folded so as to admit the air through the entire opening; therefore an unlimited circulation of air, which will be greatly appreciated in summer in hotels, hospitals, and all kinds of buildings. As it needs no weather strips and is absolutely airtight it is an ideal window in the winter.

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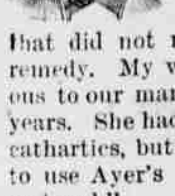
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